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REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND ON THE WORK OF ITS 1998 ANNUAL SESSION

(1-5 June 1998)*

* The present document is a mimeographed version of the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on its annual session (1-5 June 1998). The report on the first regular session (26-28 and 30 January 1998) was issued as part I. These reports will be combined with the report on the second regular session (8-11 September 1998) and issued in final form as Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 15 (E/1998/35/Rev.1-E/ICEF/1998/6/Rev.1).

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I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening of the session

1. In his opening remarks, the President of the Executive Board welcomed the participation of the Board of the UNICEF family, including delegations which had travelled from capitals, National Committees for UNICEF and many non-governmental organizations (NGOs). He said that the agenda would allow the Board to address many important issues facing UNICEF today. Their individual importance, he continued, was heightened when seen in the broader context of the United Nations reform process, and as a high profile member of the United Nations community, UNICEF clearly had an obligation to take a leading role. In his review of the major documents before the Board, he made special note of the report on resource mobilization, the discussion of which should guide the secretariat in its preparation of a draft strategy for the September Board session. This, he felt, was one of the most important subjects on the agenda. The Board had to focus on ways to obtain greater predictability of contributions to core resources, assure increased core resources and obtain greater burden sharing among donors to UNICEF. He said that the importance of the discussion to the continued ability of UNICEF to be an effective advocate for children could not be overstated, and he urged delegations to participate as fully as possible to ensure a lively and outcome-oriented discussion.

2. In closing, the President stressed that as a Board, members needed to focus on how they could support and strengthen the work of UNICEF as an integral and very important development agent of the United Nations system. He also reminded delegations of the work of UNICEF staff around the work and the need to ensure that their rights were respected: "The decisions we take at this session should ultimately help them, and through them, the children for whom they are working".

3. The Executive Director also addressed the issue of United Nations reform, noting especially the emergence of collaborative programming frameworks at the country level and the launch of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The work of UNICEF, she said, would be seen increasingly against a backdrop of harmonized United Nations development activities. She felt that the UNDAF guidelines would help to bring child rights closer to the centre of all the work of the United Nations system and to a development agenda "anchored, as never before, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women".

4. She spoke about the traditional priority issues for children, such as child health and nutrition and quality basic education, stressing that while they remained matters of urgency, they were also part and parcel of development. She also addressed a number of the longer-term development needs of children. She said that despite the remarkable progress made in the last eight years, it has been apparent that few countries will reach the World Summit for Children goals by the year 2000. UNICEF would redouble its efforts to assist those countries where major headway towards the goals was both needed and possible.

5. The Executive Director spoke in great detail about the future direction of UNICEF, with its continued emphasis on concrete goals and targets and ever-increasing emphasis on protection issues, all within the framework of the two Conventions. In closing, she acknowledged that: "For more than half a century, UNICEF's successes have grown out of our recognition of the need to focus on the well-being of the 'whole child' - an all-embracing strategy that has made it

possible for this organization to act as a moral force for children the world over, achieving triumphs that were unimaginable only a few decades ago". She urged delegations to "resolve to hold to that course, moving ever forward". (See E/ICEF/1998/CRP.9 for the full text of her statement.)

B. Adoption of the agenda

6. The agenda, timetable and organization of work of the session, as contained in documents E/ICEF/1998/7 and Corr.1, was adopted as amended orally. The agenda contained the following items:

Item 1: Opening of the session: statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director

Item 2: Adoption of the provisional agenda and timetable and organization of work

Item 3: Report of the Executive Director (Part II)

Item 4: Follow-up to the World Summit for Children

Item 5: Follow-up to International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

Item 6: UNICEF communication policy

Item 7: Resource mobilization strategy for UNICEF

Item 8: Implementation of management excellence in UNICEF

Item 9: Oral report on implementation of the policy regarding National Committees

Item 10: Oral report on implementation of the health strategy for UNICEF

Item 11: Oral report on implementation of policies and strategies on children in need of special protection measures

Item 12: Field visits of Executive Board members

Item 13: Other matters

Item 14: Closing of the session: remarks by the Executive Director and the President of the Executive Board

7. In accordance with rule 50.2 and the annex of the Rules of Procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that 67 observer delegations had submitted credentials for the session.

8. In addition, 3 United Nations bodies, 2 specialized agencies, 14 NGOs, 3 National Committees for UNICEF and Palestine had submitted credentials.

II. DELIBERATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

A. Report of the Executive Director (Part II)

9. The Executive Board had before it the report of the Executive Director (E/ICEF/1998/4 (Part II)), which was introduced by the Executive Director. She explained that it reviewed major global trends and UNICEF programme activities, as well as issues of special interest to the Board. The report revealed the renewed focus of UNICEF on helping countries to meet their goals, focusing on the realities of the 1990s that influence UNICEF work in developing countries. She said that the report reviewed new opportunities for partnerships, including with the World Bank. The operating environment of the limited availability of financial resources, chronic poverty and increasing disparity also were noted. Moreover, she continued, the report reflected on how human rights conventions influenced programmes.

10. Many speakers welcomed the report and expressed appreciation to the Executive Director and the secretariat for their efforts in its preparation and for the work carried out by UNICEF during the past year. They said that the report was informative, comprehensive and well-organized. It clearly reflected the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of UNICEF priority actions. Other delegations, however, remarked that the report was too general and descriptive. It should be more analytical and problem-oriented, and present a more forward-looking vision, especially in areas where UNICEF had a comparative advantage. One speaker suggested that future reports include qualitative indicators of organizational efficiency and effectiveness that could be tracked over time. The Executive Director said that the secretariat was constantly working to make the document as useful to Board members as possible.

11. One delegation expressed concern about the lack of clarity regarding the relationship between the Executive Board and the Economic and Social Council. In that connection, several speakers said that the guidance given by the Council to the United Nations funds and programmes should be improved, and that the issue would be pursued with the Council.

12. Many delegations shared the concerns outlined in the report regarding increasing poverty and growing disparities, the burden of external debt and reduced levels of official development assistance (ODA) at a time when the world economy was growing. Numerous speakers noted with satisfaction that UNICEF had actively sought new financial sources and encouraged donors to contribute additional resources to UNICEF. A number of delegations expressed their appreciation of UNICEF efforts in promoting the 20/20 Initiative. The Executive Director announced that there would be a presentation on the Initiative later in the session.

13. One speaker requested further clarification of UNICEF involvement in sector-wide approaches (SWAPs) and sector investment programmes (SIPs). The Director, Programme Division, explained some of the collaborative modalities, noting that SWAPs and SIPs were increasingly preferred by developing countries. They provided coherence to programme strategy, policy and implementation, and were being developed mostly in the social sectors. UNICEF was involved in the design and implementation of such programmes in several countries, mostly in Africa. The intention, he said, was to strengthen capacities of Governments to monitor public expenditure on basic social services.

14. Delegations welcomed the emphasis on the centrality of human rights and the introduction of a rights-based approach to programming. UNICEF was viewed as

the single most important advocate of child rights worldwide. A number of delegations requested information on how this new approach had affected country programming and UNICEF experience to date. The secretariat informed the Board that guidelines had only recently been issued and so it was too early to assess their impact, although a number of countries had already developed rights-based programmes. UNICEF also was interested in seeing this approach incorporated into UNDAF. The secretariat would be able to better inform the Board once the analysis of UNDAF and country annual reports was completed. One delegation requested information on cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights. The secretariat informed the Board that a cooperation agreement had been signed recently with the Centre and that work was being closely coordinated. One speaker suggested that the secretariat include an item on the rights-based approach on the agenda of a future Board session.

15. Several delegations expressed support for the UNICEF approach to concentrating its assistance on those countries most in need, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa. With regard to Africa, they noted that while UNICEF had participated actively in the preparation of the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on an integrated strategy in Africa, this was not reflected in the report. UNICEF was encouraged to follow closely the recommendations of the Secretary-General. The Executive Director acknowledged that the report did not reflect the Secretary-General's comments as it was prepared before his report was completed. Another delegation also wanted UNICEF to follow-up on the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa. One delegation inquired whether the changes to the methods for allocation general resources did not contradict the statement that programme expenditure in the least developed countries had declined in 1997. The secretariat clarified that the modified allocation system for general resources would be implemented from 1999 onwards and would particularly favour the least developed countries.

16. Many delegations recognized the commitment of UNICEF to the United Nations reform process, especially to UNDAF at the field level. They noted with appreciation UNICEF efforts to ensure that children's rights were given a high priority in all United Nations activities. One speaker expressed the hope that Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs would lead to increased coordination and a more constructive role for UNICEF. Several delegations requested information on the experience to date with UNDAF. The secretariat replied that UNDAF was currently being piloted in 19 countries and that this experience would be evaluated in the coming year. UNICEF was urged to continue its cooperation efforts both within the United Nations and with bilateral partners. One speaker expressed appreciation for the convening of the joint session with the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA) and hoped that such joint sessions would continue. UNICEF support of other areas within the reform process, such as the resident coordinator system and common premises, also was welcomed. With regard to the resident coordinator system, the secretariat said that there were ongoing discussions in the United Nations Development Group to make the selection more system-wide. Appreciation was expressed for the organization's internal management reform efforts, which dovetailed with United Nations reform efforts. The Executive Director stressed the importance of evaluations, especially to inform whether any course corrections were needed as well as to avoid duplication of efforts. She hoped that child rights would be integrated into activities.

17. The issue of children in need of special protection was raised by several speakers. They said that UNICEF should use a multisectoral approach in dealing with child labour, stressing the link between child labour and education. One

speaker expressed concern about the lack of reporting on drug trafficking and substance abuse, especially in view of their devastating consequences for children. The Executive Director informed the Board that UNICEF was sponsoring a panel involving youth during the Twentieth Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem, which would be held the week after the present Board session. UNICEF work in demining activities was commended, and the problems of children affected by past nuclear tests were raised.

18. The prominence given to HIV/AIDS in the report, as well as UNICEF efforts, especially in the context of the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), were commended by many speakers. One delegation stressed the need to consider carefully the link between breastfeeding and the vertical transmission of HIV. UNICEF was urged to take a leadership role with others in developing a suitable vaccine against HIV. The secretariat responded that, at present, the cost of pharmaceutical intervention was prohibitive. However, UNICEF and others have been talking to pharmaceutical companies to find ways to reduce prices.

19. Mention was made of the devastating consequences of malaria, and UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and others were commended for putting malaria high on their agendas. UNICEF was urged to collaborate even more closely with WHO in this area, especially in the search for an anti-malarial vaccine. The Executive Director added that UNICEF would be participating in a consultation with WHO on malaria.

20. Delegations supported the emphasis on gender in UNICEF programmes as a cross-cutting issue. It was felt that education, especially of girls, was essential. The role of men also was mentioned by several speakers, who welcomed the fact that UNICEF was examining the issue. The Executive Director commented that UNICEF was increasingly aware of the importance of the role of men and that this concern was built into UNICEF programmes. She said that a working paper on this subject had been prepared for UNICEF staff and that it would be used to help shape future programme guidelines. She also brought to the attention of the Board a paper entitled "Men in Families".

21. Speakers addressing issues of coordination and cooperation expressed support for UNICEF recognition of the importance of National Committees, NGOs and civil society organizations in its work. Particular mention was made of its good collaboration with WHO and the International Labour Organization (ILO), and UNICEF was encouraged to further strengthen coordination with other agencies and institutions, including the World Bank and regional organizations, to avoid duplication. In response, the secretariat commented on the World Bank's collaborative participation in the social sector, especially in the areas of education, especially girls' education, and child labour, to name a few.

22. One speaker expressed concern about the lack of information in the report on UNICEF activities in emergency operations, and requested that it be included in future reports. The secretariat responded that a report on emergencies was submitted to the Board in 1997, and in accordance with decision 1997/7 (E/ICEF/1997/12/Rev.1), the next report would be presented to the Board in 2000.

23. A number of delegations welcomed the steps taken to strengthen monitoring and evaluation. One delegation requested more information on how lessons learned were integrated into programming. Another speaker said that UNICEF should make greater use of external, independent evaluations.

24. Many comments were made about the goals as well as the challenges facing UNICEF. Numerous speakers acknowledged that UNICEF had worked hard to achieve the World Summit for Children goals, and expressed appreciation for the organization's candour in admitting that all the goals would not be met. UNICEF was encouraged to focus its efforts on the neediest and to replicate examples of successful interventions. One speaker said that the international community must remain aware of the importance of basic social services for those most in need. The secretariat added that although all the goals would not be met, many countries were working very hard and were committed to improving the well-being of their children. One delegation requested that the secretariat keep the Board informed of its progress in developing the new agenda for children for the next century. The Executive Director agreed and said that this would be discussed in more detail at the 1999 annual session.

25. In addressing the meeting, the representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) spoke about the lack of a joint working relationship between the two organizations. She mentioned the recommendation of the UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education, which met last year, that listed possible areas of focus of joint cooperation between the two organizations. However, since that time, no decision had been made. She requested a formal indication from UNICEF of the priority areas for joint UNESCO/UNICEF cooperation over the period mid-1998 to the year 2000. In order for the cooperation to be pragmatic, effective and realistic, both organizations also should try to be specific about the resources they planned to allocate or mobilize for the priority areas of cooperation. She expressed the hope that next year, they would be able to report on progress in the already substantial partnership between UNESCO and UNICEF, particularly at the field level, as well as in efforts towards strengthening the emphasis on quality basic education. In closing, she said that she hoped to be able to report such progress to UNESCO Executive Board, which had voiced some concern about this matter and had asked for a report at its next session in October 1998. The Executive Director replied that, at present, collaboration between the two organizations was very headquarters-focused, and that UNICEF looked forward to working with UNESCO on more field-oriented projects.

B. Follow-up to the World Summit for Children

26. The Director, Division of Evaluation, Policy and Planning (EPP), introduced the "Progress report on follow-up to the World Summit for Children" (E/ICEF/1998/8). She said that the document provided a global overview on achievements, difficulties encountered and future actions needed. It emphasized the synergy of the World Summit goals and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Major efforts were required to accelerate progress towards the World Summit goals guided by principles such as the best interest of children and non-discrimination. She also shared information on the multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) evaluation - its objectives, process, results, comparative advantages and impacts, as well as the use of MICS data. The evaluation suggests that MICS could be used in the future, suitably modified to monitor World Summit and other Convention indicators as they develop. To facilitate this assessment, a new MICS II version needed to be developed that would cover more indicators and be relevant to a larger number of countries; training activities needed to be organized; and additional resources were required for technical expertise and for the development of methodologies.

27. Many speakers complimented UNICEF on a more analytical and informative report. They emphasized the importance of the World Summit and its follow-up

activities. A few speakers expressed their appreciation for the role UNICEF has been playing in making progress towards the goals, while others voiced their concern about the areas that were lagging behind. Two delegations expected that greater emphasis would be placed on differences at the regional level. UNICEF was urged to use United Nations reform and the UNDAF process to accelerate work for children. Many delegations stressed the importance of inter-agency collaboration in accelerating progress towards the World Summit goals.

28. The linkage between the World Summit goals and the Convention on the Rights of the Child were supported by many speakers, and several supported the organization's increasing emphasis on human rights and child rights. The Convention was welcomed as a framework, and the guidelines on rights programming were thought to be useful. Several delegations suggested that UNICEF should increase support to countries to develop child rights indicators. Two speakers called for support to increase the membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 10 to 18. In response, the secretariat reaffirmed the importance of indicators, especially those on child protection. Early this year, UNICEF had organized a child rights indicators meeting, involving UNICEF headquarters and field staff, academics, NGOs and other United Nations agencies. A report of the meeting would be shared at a later stage.

29. Most delegations urged UNICEF to take more focused action to accelerate progress towards the World Summit goals. Several speakers voiced their concern about the stagnation of immunization rates, adding that some achievements actually might have regressed. In this regard, UNICEF should continue to support local capacity-building to reach the goals in areas such as vaccine production. The secretariat said that UNICEF supported local capacity-building and the development of a second generation national programme of action to place children at the centre of national agendas and to enhance progress towards the World Summit goals and the realization of child rights.

30. The priority actions described in the document were supported by many speakers. It was suggested that priorities should be established based on what UNICEF itself would do and what it could persuade others to do. UNICEF should focus its priority actions where demonstrable results could be achieved and a real difference made for children in the remaining two years. Two delegations questioned the budgetary implications for UNICEF. One speaker asked what percentage of the goals could be reached in less than three years and the time-frame required for achieving the World Summit goals. Another speaker questioned the criteria used in country selection. The work towards defining an agenda for the organization's future work was supported. The secretariat in formed delegations that the World Summit goals had been confirmed by subsequent international conferences, including ICPD, with extended time-frames. The criteria for selecting the short-term priorities included: countries with an under-five mortality rate over 70 per 1,000 live births; epidemiological considerations, such as malaria; the severity and extent of the problem at the country level; and countries that had a firm commitment and successful experience. Funding sources were mainly country-based funds, UNICEF resources and other funds.

31. Many delegations emphasized the importance of monitoring and assessment of progress, as well as data collection and usage. UNICEF was requested to increase its focus on involving local governments in monitoring progress and building their capacity, and UNICEF was complimented on developing the MICS methodology.

32. The importance of gender equality was stressed by several delegations, which added that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be viewed in the same light as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that more efforts should be given to ratifying the former. One speaker suggested that indicators should be developed to monitor the situation of gender equality. The secretariat expressed ongoing support for gender disaggregated data.

33. In view of the fact that there was also a follow-up report on ICPD being submitted to the Board at the present session, one speaker suggested that UNICEF should coordinate its reporting to the Board on the follow-up to international conferences. In reply, the secretariat expressed its strong support for integrated follow-up to international conferences.

34. Many delegations expressed concern about the decline in ODA and called on donor countries to increase their support to UNICEF. They also urged UNICEF to strengthen its resource mobilization efforts. One speaker wanted clarification on the involvement of UNICEF in the 20/20 Initiative. The secretariat said that UNICEF attached great importance to resource mobilization. With regard to the 20/20 Initiative, UNICEF was the lead United Nations agency in coordinating follow-up to the Initiative. Some 30 country studies were being undertaken which were building national capacity to monitor public expenditure on basic social services, and which would contribute to the global consultation on the subject in October this year in Hanoi, Viet Nam. In addition, the Director, EPP, mentioned that a presentation would be made on follow-up to the 20/20 Initiative immediately following the present session.

35. A few delegations expressed their satisfaction about the inclusion of progress on child protection issues. UNICEF was urged to develop indicators to monitor child protection issues. Another speaker expressed concern regarding the lack of coordination in addressing child protection issues. There was no mention of partners and what others were doing. The secretariat said that UNICEF had strengthened its collaboration with other United Nations agencies, such as with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights in the area of children in armed conflict, and with ILO and the World Bank on child labour.

36. Several speakers said that the end-decade review session in 2001 was very important, and they wanted to know the status of preparation for this event. One delegation looked forward to the Secretary-General's report on the design of the 2001 session. Two delegations said that their countries, as initiating countries of the World Summit for Children in 1990, would work together with UNICEF in preparing for the end-decade review. In response, the secretariat expressed its appreciation for the commitment of the two initiating countries. UNICEF attached great importance to the 2001 session. A process of preparation for the end-decade review already had been set in motion within UNICEF. Up to now, a desk review of available documents had been conducted at headquarters, and regional focal points had been appointed. Consultations to review progress would be conducted at all levels, with the review at the national level being the most critical. The key challenges ahead were to measure progress and mobilize adequate resources. To adequately measure progress, an additional $20 million were required to cover the cost of development and implementation of a global assessment process. (See the annex, decisions 1998/12 and 1998/13, for the texts of the decisions adopted by the Executive Board.)

C. Resource mobilization strategy for UNICEF

37. The Executive Director introduced the report on resource mobilization (E/ICEF/1998/11), highlighting the need for increased predictability, volume and more equitable sharing of the burden of financing UNICEF action on behalf of children. She thanked delegations for informal input to earlier discussions and noted that the document and the summary of these discussions would be transmitted to the Economic and Social Council. She encouraged members to share their views and feedback on issues and questions raised in intersessionals as their input would feed into the preparation of the outline for the resource mobilization strategy to be tabled at the September Board session and approved at the first regular session of 1999. In addition to the efforts of the Board, she noted that an intense effort was under way within the organization to improve the timeliness and quality of reporting, the management of resources at the country level, and the coordination of in-house actors responsible for different aspects of resource mobilization.

38. Several delegations welcomed the report and expressed appreciation to the secretariat for the concise, timely and well-focused approach taken in the document.

39. There was broad-based consensus around the need to increase the volume and predictability of the resource base for UNICEF. This was seen as an objective not only in the context of facilitating the planning and management of UNICEF actions in the field, but also as part of a system-wide issue for all the funds and programmes. There were several references to the need for a significant revival of political will in favour of the multilateral system, and a number of delegations said that they wanted to see a more equitable distribution of the financial burden relating to the core budget. The latter issues were fundamental to the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of fund-raising efforts by UNICEF and other funds and programmes.

40. Responding to questions from the Executive Director regarding what the organization itself could do to enlist donor support, three factors emerged. Firstly, the overriding majority of speakers cited the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of programmes as being the determining factor in resource mobilization. Secondly, major donors highlighted the importance they assigned to being able to 'demonstrate development impact' - through better reports, more effective public communication and improved financial systems aimed at addressing accountability issues. Finally, a number of delegations felt that innovation and sustainability were tantamount to captivating new interest and retaining existing donors.

41. Many delegations agreed on the need to quantify programme needs as a basis for funding targets. Their caveat was simply that targets be set realistically, that priorities be articulated and that UNICEF be able to communicate not only the potential impact of new resources in programmatic terms, but also the detrimental effects of not receiving the requisite resources. Several delegations commended the Executive Director for the initiative taken to prioritize and target the actions required from 1998 to the year 2000 in an effort to achieve the end-of-the-decade World Summit goals. Other speakers were interested in further details about the process in place to develop the discussion of the Agenda for Children Beyond the Year 2000. Both initiatives were seen as valuable strategic components in the development of a resource mobilization strategy. Several donor Governments highlighted the increasing interest in and value of expressing programme needs in thematic terms and the growing prospects for funding of that nature, but noted that flexibility and

institutional capacity would be needed for programming, presenting and managing resources accordingly.

42. The heart of the discussion centred around mechanisms that would allow the issues of programme targets to be addressed in the same context with adequate, more predictable and equitably shared contributions. In this regard, one delegation proposed that programme targets and administrative budgets be consolidated over a three-year, forward-looking, rolling cycle and presented to the Board for review. At the same time, delegations would be expected to make three-year commitments or indicative pledges, thus allowing the Board itself to link the approval of programme needs with a plan for obtaining resources to carry them out. A number of the major donors to UNICEF expressed support for this proposal, especially the concept of linking programme planning levels with resource commitments. Some donors were able to commit to the idea of multi-year pledges, while others could only agree to providing indicative planning levels beyond one year.

43. Beyond the pledging process, other mechanisms that had been proposed by the Executive Director in earlier discussions with the Board were referred to in interventions and included the following:

(a) Payment of core funding pledged amount early in the UNICEF fiscal year: almost all donors agreed;

(b) Payment of pledged amounts according to an agreed schedule: this would not be a problem, but in fact, it might not be necessary in many cases as most could agree to pay the full contribution early in the fiscal year;

(c) Agreement to a minimum floor of core contribution: for one or two donors, this was acceptable, while for others it was desirable but impossible since for them it changed the voluntary nature of the pledge and/or more simply their budgeting systems would not allow it;

(d) Payment in United States dollars: this was generally not accepted, although the Executive Director later clarified that the issue was not so much payment in United States dollars as seeking a mechanism that would lead to the reduction of exposure to exchange risks.

44. Most delegations devoted at least part of their statements to the issue of sources of funding. There was considerable positive feedback and encouragement in response to the question as to whether UNICEF should, in fact, seek closer collaboration and financing with international financial institutions such as the World Bank and regional banks. It was generally felt that as long as the Board was playing a key role in programmes and policy, and UNICEF itself was faithful to its mandate, there was little risk of altering the character of the organization in any significant way. One delegation cautioned against UNICEF becoming an implementing agent of the international financial institutions.

45. Similarly, the Executive Director was encouraged by many delegations to pursue policy dialogue and funding efforts with the European Union. Several delegations offered their support.

46. The important role of the private sector in the bigger picture of funding sources with growth potential was highlighted by a number of delegations. Several speakers underlined the potential for increasing the levels of private sector funding; however, it was felt that this should keep pace with rather than replace growth from the Government side. Many speakers hastened to add,

nevertheless, that approximately one-third share of the burden now borne by the private sector should not be exceeded significantly if UNICEF was to remain essentially an intergovernmental body. The National Committees themselves underlined the importance of timely and quality reporting, flexibility to move adeptly into thematic funding modalities, the importance of setting priorities and the urgency in issuing guidelines for corporate fund-raising. The Chairman of the Standing Group on National Committees suggested that National Committees could, in fact, commit a fixed proportion of their income to general resources on a multi-year basis.

47. Funding sources at the country level were mentioned briefly by a few delegations. Some speakers felt that private sector and corporate fund-raising opportunities could be further developed in some developing countries. One donor Government noted that the decentralized decision-making of a number of government donors presented an opportunity for UNICEF staff at the country level to have outreach, involve bilaterals in policy planning and dialogue with Government, and integrate plans more fully with partners on the ground. The implication of donor Government decentralization also would ultimately require increased diligence in contribution management at the country level which, hopefully, the new field office software would address.

48. Two delegations from developing countries noted the potential to enhance the financial resource base with donations-in-kind and human resources.

49. Several speakers from recipient countries raised concerns about the need to address the low response rate to emergency appeals, although one did not want emergency funding to detract from development action. A third delegation highlighted the persistent needs of countries in transition which repeatedly fell in the gap between development and emergency.

50. The Executive Director expressed appreciation to delegations for their comments and particularly their specificity. The secretariat, she said, had taken note of the strong emphasis on the importance to donors of the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of programmes with demonstrable results. It was underlined that everyone in UNICEF played a role in fund-raising, that the secretariat was very conscious of the decentralization of donor decision-making, that National Committees played a key role and, acknowledging this reality, UNICEF was trying to work even more closely with them.

51. Furthermore, it was noted that as UNICEF moved into new markets with different kinds of customers, it was required to tailor its efforts differently. Hence, customer relations was assuming increasing importance. This meant decreasing the bureaucracy and streamlining processes with the objective of increasing efficiency.

52. To some extent, the issue of burden share was being addressed in the diversification away from traditional donors to new corporate and private sector donors, with Change for Good, Caran d'ache, Flic Flac and Merck cited as examples. Corporate relationships at the country level also were developing, and partnerships with service organizations such as Rotary International and Kiwanis were being reinforced.

53. Responding to questions on the flex-team on resource mobilization, delegations were advised that it had been transformed into an interdivisional working group on resource mobilization of concerned division heads. It would meet regularly to address issues raised by the team as well as ongoing cross-cutting themes such as developing the relationship with the European Union,

emergency fund-raising and using the Internet as a fund-raising vehicle. (See the annex, decision 1998/8, for the text of the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

D. UNICEF communication policy

54. The Director of the Division of Communication (DOC) introduced the report on the "UNICEF communication policy" (E/ICEF/1998/10), noting that much of the success of UNICEF over the past 50 years was attributable to the effective use of communication to promote the issues and concerns of children. From its earliest days, communication played a central place in the work of UNICEF. Because of the need to raise funds and because communication was an essential part of programme delivery, UNICEF had to explain its work to donors effectively and convincingly. As a result of this long experience and investment in communication, UNICEF had accumulated a wealth of knowledge and unique network of communication staff in field offices and National Committees. The Director, DOC, said that the Executive Board's request for a statement on the UNICEF communication policy had come at an opportune time. Rapid advances in technology, the move towards globalization of the media and the shift to programming for children's rights required UNICEF to establish a coherent communication framework that reflected organizational goals and ways to achieve them. He pointed out that the report resulted from a consultation process that had involved staff throughout the organization, as well as input from external experts.

55. Delegations expressed appreciation for the complete and comprehensive nature of the report, the clear elaboration of goals and strategies in communication that it contained, and its usefulness as a framework to guide the work of the organization in this area. Several delegations welcomed the clear definitions of accountabilities in communication at country, regional and global levels, and the intention of the secretariat to develop a human resources strategy for communication staff.

56. In their interventions, many delegations stressed the vital role that communication played in reaching programme goals, and urged UNICEF to continue to find ways to integrate communication into programme activities.

57. Several delegations commended the strategy of focusing on partnerships with the media, including audio-visual and print co-productions, rather than relying on in-house production and dissemination to get the organization's messages to target audiences.

58. One speaker asked what steps the secretariat was taking to produce information products in languages other than English, French and Spanish. In reply, the Director, DOC, pointed out that the decentralized nature of communication activities meant that many field offices and National Committees adapted and translated material produced centrally for local needs. As examples, he pointed to The State of the World's Children report, which is translated into more that 40 languages each year, and the Facts for Life publication, which has been translated into 215 languages.

59. Several delegations linked the communication policy paper to the earlier discussion on resource mobilization and stressed the central role of communication in fund-raising. They requested that steps be taken to ensure that the potential contribution of communication to fund-raising efforts was tapped and support given to National Committees in this area. The Director,

DOC, agreed that this was an important area of activity, as stressed in the report. DOC maintained close links with the Private Sector Division (PSD) and had a programme to produce fund-raising materials.

60. One delegation emphasized the need to ensure that all communication materials and channels were culturally relevant and appropriate for the needs of target audiences. In this regard, a number of delegations pointed out that while the Internet was becoming a major communication medium in industrialized countries and provided an inexpensive way to disseminate information to target audiences, access in the developing world was limited and likely to remain so for some time. The Director, DOC, acknowledged this fact and admitted that balancing the question of equitable access to modern media and the financial investment the organization should make in them remained a challenge and was under constant review.

61. One delegation questioned whether the communication policy adequately set out the communication priorities of UNICEF and how, in a period of limited resources, the organization would choose between them. The secretariat responded that the priorities of UNICEF in communication would follow those of the organization as a whole. At the country level, these priorities were set out as part of the country programming process.

62. In response to a suggestion that UNICEF should consider developing a communication manual to help guide country office staff in their work, the Director, DOC, said that a UNICEF Information Manual had been issued four years ago. It was currently being revised and would be issued as a more comprehensive Communication Manual in early 1999. (See the annex, decision 1998/9, for the text of the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

E. Implementation of management excellence in UNICEF

63. The Director of Change Management introduced the two reports being presented to the Executive Board on the results of management excellence to date. The first document provided an update of the organization of UNICEF (E/ICEF/Organization/Rev.3), last presented to the Board in 1993, reflecting adjustments made to the accountabilities of country representatives, and regional and headquarters directors. The second document, entitled "Positioning UNICEF for the twenty-first century: the impact of management excellence, 1995-1998" (E/ICEF/1998/AB/L.5), provided an assessment of the key measures undertaken at country, regional and headquarters locations that have improved the overall efficiency and effectiveness of UNICEF-assisted programmes of cooperation.

64. In her presentation, the Director described how Management Excellence Programme (MEP) interventions had created the conditions necessary to strengthen UNICEF-assisted programmes through improved planning and decision-making processes; clearly defined accountabilities; updated information systems and management tools; increased access to information and knowledge; more efficient work processes; and new regional mechanisms, such as regional management teams (RMTs). She also spoke of parallel efforts being made to strengthen the organization's overall performance management system to monitor implementation of the medium-term plan (MTP) for 1999-2002. She assured members of the Board that efforts would continue over the next year to pursue excellence in priority areas such as implementation of management information systems, the development of programme knowledge networks, the development of a career management system as well as the revitalization of resource mobilization strategies to leverage

resources for children. In closing, she attributed the achievements of MEP to the intensive investment of time and energy of UNICEF staff, and commended staff members on their remarkable commitment to change despite the challenges that arose along the way.

65. The UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia spoke about experiences in his region and the role of both the regional office and the RMT in supporting and monitoring UNICEF-assisted programmes and in contributing to the global policy. The RMT, comprised of the country representatives, the Regional Director, some senior staff in the Regional Office and representative of the staff associations, meets regularly to review progress and decide on priorities, guided by a detailed regional work plan prepared at the beginning of the year. He also provided a concrete example of the country programme recommendation (CPR) preparation process, emphasizing its highly participatory nature. The Regional Director explained how indicators for both management and programme performance had been developed and how progress was reviewed regularly at RMT meetings. In conclusion, he said that the process of "regionalization" had improved programme quality and output, had made it possible for UNICEF to meet new challenges, and was resulting in better assisted programmes for children and women in South Asia.

66. Many delegations expressed appreciation for the thorough review of the implementation and impact of MEP, with several speakers thanking the secretariat for the comprehensive, well-structured reports and commending the leadership of top management and staff participation for the success of MEP. The UNICEF staff were also congratulated for their commitment to change, a process which called for innovation, flexibility and hard work. Another speaker expressed appreciation for the dialogue between the Executive Board and the secretariat throughout the course of MEP which gave Board members a true feeling of ownership.

67. A number of Board members expressed their satisfaction with results achieved in management excellence, stating that reforms identified three years ago had indeed been implemented. Specific reference was made to the enhanced capacities of UNICEF to manage resources and the strengthened accountability for results. Given the achievements of MEP, one delegation emphasized the need for a communication strategy to build awareness of UNICEF as a transparent, effective organization for children as a means of increasing awareness of the results of contributions made to UNICEF.

68. Delegations commented on the tangible results of MEP, with one speaker referring to the accomplishments as the end of the first phase of change, which positioned UNICEF well for the next phase - the year 2000 review and the launching of a new global agenda for children.

69. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the redistribution of functions and skills among country, regional and headquarters offices. However, concern was expressed by one speaker about whether the use of management teams had affected the direction and control required by the organization to ensure implementation of results emerging from team work.

70. Three Board members recalled that their visits to UNICEF country offices had confirmed the positive impact of MEP in the field. They found that the elements of change were indeed in place and that the decentralization of procedures was working well. Another speaker pointed to increased Government involvement in programme review activities and improvements made in the

transparency, effectiveness and efficiency of UNICEF operations within the country.

71. One delegation inquired about the relationship between the country programme management plan (CPMP), the country note and UNDAF. The Director, Change Management, explained the purposes and linkages between each of the three processes. She provided a recent example of how the preparation of the CPMP by the UNICEF India office had ensured that the necessary resources and systems would be in place to support the successful achievement of the programme objectives listed in the new CPR to be presented to the Board for approval in September. The UNICEF Representative for Colombia also responded by illustrating how MEP had contributed to the enrichment of programmes and increased collaboration within the United Nations country team in promoting peace and children's rights.

72. Regional offices were commended for improvements in strategic planning, budget clearance processes and improved oversight of country offices. Specific reference was made to the role played by the Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States in concluding a three-party agreement between the Government, the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights and UNICEF to achieve greater effectiveness in actions for children. The intervention made by the Regional Director for South Asia also was viewed as a role model for the coordination of United Nations agencies at the regional level. In response to a query about the application of regional priorities, the Regional Director for South Asia explained how regional priorities were identified and used to improve effectiveness.

73. Several comments were made with regard to improvements at headquarters. The renewal of the Programme Group was highlighted by one delegation as being a positive step.

74. Several speakers commented on UNICEF achievements in strengthening information technology systems. The Executive Director informed delegations that a report on information technology management would be presented to the Board in 1999 and offered the possibility of having an intersessional discussion on information technology management if Board members wanted an opportunity to discuss it prior to the session.

75. One delegation expressed disappointment with the decision not to relocate PSD to Europe, stating that he still believed the division should be located as close as possible to its most important market, and requested that UNICEF reconsider its decision.

76. One speaker inquired about progress in the area of human resources management, while another speaker suggested that local capacities be considered more in the context of the UNICEF career management system. The Director, Change Management, said that the development and implementation of a career management system was a priority area for the coming year. She described progress in human resources management as being achieved through: decentralizing accountability for effective human resources management to all managers and chiefs of section; investments in training in management skills; the introduction of new mechanisms allowing for staff/management dialogue; the participation of staff representatives on office management teams; and increased attention to performance appraisals as well as to appraisals of supervisors.

77. The Executive Director added that human resources management and career management were high priorities for UNICEF. She spoke of staff morale as having

undergone both improvements and decline throughout the course of MEP due to the anxiety created by change and the untimeliness of having to deal with a tighter budget. She looked forward to continuing dialogue with the Board on these issues and on progress with the career management system.

78. One speaker conveyed his Government's confidence that UNICEF was getting the best returns on resources used. Another speaker stressed the need for indicators to be developed allowing the Board to appreciate how effectively and efficiently UNICEF used its resources. The Director, Change Management, described how UNICEF measured and reported on efficiency and effectiveness gains and reminded delegations that a consolidated analysis of efficiency gains was presented to the Board in the biennium budget submissions. She provided examples of regional initiatives to improve performance monitoring and highlighted steps being taken to strengthen the overall performance of the UNICEF management system to be reflected in the MTP for 1998-2001.

79. After having MEP reports discussed at every session of the Executive Board for the past three years, a number of delegations expressed the view that it was time to end follow-up of MEP as a specific agenda item, with a few suggesting that the issue could be revisited in a few years. Issues for future feedback identified by speakers included a review of how UNICEF offices have adjusted to new roles and instruments, and the development of evaluation mechanisms to assist the Board in monitoring management excellence to assure high standards. The meeting ended with a presentation by the Senior Auditor, which highlighted ideas currently being discussed within UNICEF on how to strengthen performance management systems to better plan for and demonstrate results of UNICEF activities. (See the annex, decision 1998/11, for the text of the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

Oral report on the outcome of the work of the "Group of Volunteers" on relations between the Executive Board and the secretariat

80. At its third regular session of 1997, the Executive Board had reviewed proposed guidelines for an effective partnership between the Executive Board and the secretariat (E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.13), which had been prepared by a so-called "Group of Volunteers" composed of members of the Executive Board. In decision 1997/29, the Board had decided to revisit the issue no later than the 1998 annual session.

81. The representative of Switzerland said that the Group, initially composed of five individual members, had initiated the exercise two years ago to bring clarity to the relationship between the Board and the secretariat. Following the decision taken in September 1997, the Group had organized an open-ended informal consultation on 17 October 1997, at which delegations had been invited to comment on the proposed guidelines. Six delegations had done so. The Group decided not to continue the exercise and had not prepared new draft guidelines for the following reasons: (a) they found that they repeatedly had to explain the historical context of the exercise to new members of the Board; (b) they had been unable to find the time to review and amend the guidelines and organize another informal consultation; and (c) they realized that, to a large extent, the guidelines were being applied by the secretariat. Today, the Group had nothing to offer beyond the original proposed guidelines.

82. He believed, however, that the guidelines were basically good ones that could support effective Board-secretariat collaboration even without their formal endorsement by the Board. They could be useful as they provided a clear and effective division of labour. Their usefulness was demonstrated further by

the fact that the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board was trying to develop a similar division of labour.

F. Follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development

83. The report on the follow-up to ICPD (E/ICEF/1998/9), prepared in response to decision 1995/29 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), was introduced by the Director, Programme Division. Highlighting UNICEF achievements in operationalizing the ICPD goals and objectives, he emphasized that the goals mandated the UNICEF agenda for action to protect the health and well-being of women and children. They were guided by the UNICEF rights perspective and implemented within the country programme approach in a coordinated and integrated manner. Although UNICEF does not have a separate programme or budget for ICPD follow-up, most of what UNICEF does as an organization, both in spirit and in practice, is in line with the ICPD Programme of Action.

84. He also emphasized the close collaboration that exists between UNICEF and its sister agencies, particularly WHO, and as exemplified in several inter-agency models such as the WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health and UNDAF in implementing programmes. UNICEF country programmes were strengthened through partnerships with United Nations agencies, Governments, donors, bilateral and multilateral organizations, NGOs and civil societies.

85. Most delegations welcomed the multisectoral and problem-solving approach of UNICEF to implementing programmes, noting that UNICEF had made significant progress. Many speakers appreciated the efforts in strengthening partnerships and were interested to know how UNICEF contributed to UNDAF and how it collaborated at the country level with UNFPA. Speakers recommended the development of South-South programmes for strengthening midwifery services. An observer delegation informed the meeting that the International Paediatric Association and the Federation of International Gynaecologists and Obstetricians was planning a discussion on the integration of safe motherhood and invited UNICEF to participate.

86. Many speakers agreed with the priority areas for UNICEF follow-up and felt that UNICEF also played a major role in promoting vitamin A supplementation, tackling the problem of HIV/AIDS, and ending female genital mutilation and violence against women. Speakers were informed that UNICEF was pleased about the findings from vitamin A studies and that an informal discussion on the findings, hosted by WHO, would be held in late 1998. Donors and Governments would be welcome to participate.

87. The alarming increase in HIV/AIDS infection in India, South Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa was noted with concern, and questions were raised about the UNICEF strategy for tackling this problem and how the breastfeeding strategy was handled in resource poor countries. A Board member circulated a "Memorandum for an International Therapeutic Solidarity" on HIV/AIDS and requested that UNICEF provide a position on it. The secretariat informed delegations that WHO, UNICEF and other co-sponsors of UNAIDS were working together on an approach to reduce mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and were in the early stages of developing guidelines. As a preliminary step, efforts to reduce mother-to-child transmission would be implemented on a limited scale to determine the constraints, the actual costs involved and the effectiveness of these interventions.

88. Speakers appreciated the inclusion of successful programme experiences, for instance, in Cameroon and Uganda, on promoting education, and recommended their duplication and expansion into other regions and parts of the world.

89. Questions were raised about the role of UNICEF in family planning and reproductive health. Some speakers recommended that UNICEF take a more active role in promoting family planning as a method of child spacing. Another delegation commented that UNICEF should abide by the mandate approved by the Board and asked if there had been a policy change. Delegations were informed that the UNICEF policy on family planning remained unchanged.

90. Some speakers said that UNICEF also should focus on the role of men. The Director, Programme Division, informed that UNICEF was very supportive of this and announced the formation of an Interdivisional Working Group on the Role of Men in Families to enhance the role of men in improving the lives of women and children.

91. A statement by the NGO Working Group on Girls was presented by the International Federation of the University of Women, which urged UNICEF to keep the holistic development of girls and empowerment central to its programmes.

92. In response to questions of monitoring using process indicators, speakers were informed that process indicators developed in collaboration with WHO and UNFPA were being used to monitor programmes in Bangladesh, Egypt and Mali.

93. Numerous delegations expressed keen interest in UNICEF activities in relation to Cairo Plus Five. They were informed that UNICEF would continue to be an active participant. UNICEF had participated in the recent Round Table on Adolescent Health and would be participating in other round tables and the International Forum in Amsterdam in 1999. (See the annex, decision 1998/10, for the text of the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

G. Oral report on implementation of the policy regarding National Committees

94. The Director of the Regional Office for Europe presented an oral report on implementation of the policy regarding National Committees for UNICEF, as requested by Executive Board decision 1996/33 (E/ICEF/1996/12/Rev.1). The four governing principles of the new policy were recapitulated: (a) that National Committees should develop a closer relationship with UNICEF; (b) that UNICEF support to National Committees should be located in the Regional Office for Europe in Geneva; (c) that accountability must be improved, for which key performance indicators need to be developed; and (d) that the development of a closer relationship with National Committees must be achieved through team-building processes without prejudicing their autonomy. The Director then described the reported achievements in each one of the above-mentioned areas.

95. He spoke about the design of a joint planning process for resource mobilization with the Standing Group of National Committees. The review process of the recognition agreement had begun to reflect the new relationship, and the complex issue of improving reporting to National Committees on UNICEF activities in the field had been given increased attention. He reported that a specific website for National Committees on the Internet had been created, with immediate tangible results.

96. Delegations commented positively on the improved relationship between National Committees and the UNICEF secretariat through the effective coordinating efforts of the Regional Office for Europe in Geneva. They stated that the National Committees played an important role in their respective countries and were, in fact, representing UNICEF in the industrialized world. They also played a key role in making the Convention on the Rights of the Child known and better implemented in those countries, while making important contributions to the overall income of UNICEF. One speaker cautioned that, in advocacy work on the Convention, the National Committees should be guided by the UNICEF secretariat and not be ahead of it.

97. Some delegations stressed the fact that the test of achieving a successful joint planning process was still to come, and the development of key performance indicators was important for both National Committees and the UNICEF secretariat. The need for better reporting by the secretariat on the use of funds in the field to enhance further capacity for future fund-raising also was emphasized. Several speakers mentioned that it was too soon to judge the results of the PSD restructuring. The Regional Director replied that key performance indicators would be developed for both sides to assess performance and that the secretariat needed to improve dramatically its reporting on the use of funds.

98. A delegation also commented on the importance of a good relationship between the National Committees and the Governments, and described in some detail the very close collaboration in his own country.

99. One speaker emphasized that whereas the contributions of National Committees were very much appreciated, the overall burden and responsibility for financing UNICEF and its programmes should remain with the Governments. The contributions of National Committees should remain supplementary.

100. The need for ensuring that the planning process would be implemented effectively and that the proper staff was on board in the Geneva Office was stressed. The Regional Director assured delegations that the planning process was firmly under way and that seven National Committees were involved in joint planning with UNICEF.

101. The Executive Director emphasized the extraordinary and important role that National Committees played not only in fund-raising, but also as educators and communicators, and that much needed to be done in industrialized countries to raise consciousness about the problems of children and women in developing countries.

UNICEF cooperation with non-governmental organizations and civil society

102. The Director, Programme Division, presented an oral report on UNICEF cooperation with NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) as agreed at the September 1997 Board session. His presentation focused on four major areas: global collaboration; collaboration at the country level; institutional arrangement; and CSOs/NGOs and United Nations reform.

103. The partnerships, spanning from global to local levels, included NGOs in the traditional sense and also civic associations, community-based organizations, small indigenous grass-roots groups, women's cooperatives, associations of elders, the independent media, human rights organizations, mayors' associations and organizations of local authorities. Out of these partnerships had come an extraordinary level of social mobilization, advocacy

and concrete action at global, regional and country levels on behalf of children, sparked by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children.

104. The forging of strategic alliances with international NGOs was imperative for UNICEF since many of the problems confronting children today have regional or global causes, and some abuses of children's rights, such as child trafficking and sexual exploitation, are transnational in character. The active collaboration of UNICEF with NGOs also has been vital in preparations for and follow-up to recent international conferences. UNICEF consults regularly with NGOs on the development of new policies, strategies and programmes, and seeks their involvement in the implementation of global initiatives.

105. Collaboration at the national level has been pivotal in enhancing the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of country programmes, although the scope of collaboration varies considerably. In every country, collaboration takes place within the framework of the Basic Cooperation Agreement, programming procedures, administrative procedures, and financial rules and regulations.

106. UNICEF country offices encourage NGOs and CSOs to participate in the promotion and protection of child rights. In many countries, key NGOs and CSOs are involved increasingly in the preparation stages of the country programme.

107. UNICEF is one of the few United Nations agencies that has formalized the participation of NGOs in its governing body. Since the early 1950s, UNICEF has been granting consultative status to international development NGOs that already hold consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, engage in child-related activities and wish to formalize their relationship with UNICEF. In keeping with Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996 on the consultative relationship between the United Nations and NGOs, UNICEF will implement procedures reflecting its spirit and intent.

108. The Executive Director stressed the importance of the role of civil society. She said that civil society was a growth industry for UNICEF and that the organization's increasing involvement with civil society necessitated the capacity-building of civil society institutions.

H. Oral report on implementation of the health strategy for UNICEF

109. In endorsing the "Implementation plan of the health strategy for UNICEF" as contained in document E/ICEF/1997/3, the Executive Board requested that a report on progress made in its implementation be submitted at the present session (decision 1997/9). In his report, the Chief of the Health Section, Programme Division, highlighted the three broad and interrelated areas upon which UNICEF country-level support has concentrated during the past two years: (a) direct support for priority actions that make an immediate impact on improving health or preventing disease; (b) support to strengthen health systems; and (c) advocacy to improve health, based on monitoring and analysis.

110. Delegations welcomed the comprehensiveness of the report and its emphasis on intersectoral work with nutrition and sanitation, advocacy, capacity-building of local institutions and systems, and partnerships. UNICEF was commended for the concrete impact of its efforts in health and their renewal through the identification of programme priorities for 1998-2000. To better target its

programmes, UNICEF was encouraged to develop a country typology based on the successful banding strategy developed by UNICEF and WHO for vaccine financing.

111. While UNICEF was commended for its involvement as a children's advocate in health sector reforms, it was considered that programme funding for priority actions making an immediate impact on improving health or preventing disease should be maintained at high levels. In particular, UNICEF was encouraged to continue to support the control of diarrhoeal diseases, acute respiratory infections, malaria and measles; supplementation of vitamin A; and the eradication of poliomyelitis and dracunculiasis. Appreciation also was expressed for the organization's commitment to the health and development of young people.

112. Responding to concerns raised about the sustainability of the Bamako Initiative, a key strategy to the strengthening of the health systems, the Regional Director for West and Central Africa provided a regional overview of implementation of the Initiative. She stressed the necessity of adapting the approach to each country and the importance of inter-agency partnership, and highlighted some remaining challenges such as vaccine supply and distribution, and cold-chain equipment and maintenance. She also underlined the issue of community participation as being at the core of any efforts aiming at sustainability.

I. Oral report on implementation of policies and strategies on children in need of special protection

113. The oral report on implementation of the UNICEF policy on children in need of special protection measures, and the accompanying conference room paper (CRP) (E/ICEF/1998/CRP.11), were presented by the Deputy Director, Programme Division. The CRP was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1997/21 and provides an overview of progress in the area of child protection. Focusing on the integration of protection issues with UNICEF country programmes, it highlights prevention and targeted responses, capacity-building, relevant partnerships and information gathering.

114. Many delegations intervened on this agenda item. There was broad support for activities in the area of child protection where UNICEF was breaking new ground. Several delegations expressed their satisfaction with the report, and welcomed the efforts under way at country, regional and global levels to address, and especially to mainstream, these issues. The importance of child protection issues as core elements of UNICEF programmes was highlighted, along with the need for enhanced organizational capacity. In this regard, delegations welcomed recent steps to recruit additional regional advisers and the appointment of a chief of section at headquarters.

115. With regard to specific issues of concern, several delegations noted progress with regard to child labour, the impact of armed conflict on children and childhood disability. There was broad support for the capacity-building initiatives under way, as well as the further strengthening of strategic partnerships with United Nations agencies, the World Bank, the Special Rapporteur as well as NGOs. However, one delegation urged UNICEF to pay greater attention to the situation of institutionalized children.

116. Given the complexities of the various protection issues and remaining gaps in terms of appropriate data and monitoring tools, a number of speakers requested the secretariat to give increased priority to information gathering

and the development of an appropriate knowledge base with accompanying programming tools. Delegations also called for more detailed information on country-level activities addressing protection issues, and it was proposed that the secretariat provide reports on policy implementation every two years.

117. The Deputy Director welcomed the many interventions made by delegations and the Board's strong support and continuing interest in these issues. In this regard, she pointed out that historically, the involvement of the Executive Board had been crucial to UNICEF embracing issues related to children trapped in extremely difficult circumstances, starting in 1984 and leading to subsequent policy decisions in 1986, 1996 and 1997. The present debate, she noted, further highlighted this interest, which would strengthen further efforts by the secretariat to strengthen capacity, develop a better understanding, and provide enhanced support to regional and country offices as protection concerns were mainstreamed further with an emphasis on preventive strategies.

J. Field visits of Executive Board members

118. The combined report of the two field visits of Executive Board members to Guinea and Mali (16-28 February 1998) and Bangladesh (12-26 February 1998) (E/ICEF/1998/CRP.10) was introduced by two representatives of the teams.

119. The teams expressed their appreciation for these very informative visits, which gave them an opportunity to appraise the situation of women and children in programme countries and to see first-hand the many aspects of UNICEF field operations. One of the presenters highlighted the usefulness of the field trip at an early stage of membership on the Executive Board as it enabled a better understanding of the needs in the field and a better understanding of country programmes. Both teams were impressed by the effective UNICEF work in the field; its good relations with the host Governments and other partners, particularly other United Nations agencies; and the dedication of its staff.

120. In the ensuing debate, one speaker congratulated UNICEF for the effective implementation of MEP in the field and for its constructive participation in the UNDAF exercises along with other United Nations agencies in the pilot countries. He expressed satisfaction with the good relations between UNICEF and other partners, but cautioned against the possibility of UNICEF field offices becoming only an executing agency for other institutions. He also expressed concern about the risk of confusing the roles of UNICEF and host Governments in programme activities. UNICEF, he said, should help Governments assume their roles by helping them to strengthen their capacities.

121. Another speaker noted the positive involvement of communities in all programme activities and government ownership of programmes. He also was pleased to note the good relations among UNICEF and the Governments and NGOs.

K. Statement by the Chairperson of the UNICEF Global Staff Association

122. As is usual practice at the annual session of the Board, the President of the Board invited the Chairperson of the UNICEF Global Staff Association (GSA) to address the meeting. She expressed her appreciation for the Board's continued support and interest in the welfare of UNICEF staff worldwide. She was happy to report that progress had been made in relations between managerial and non-managerial staff. She also reported briefly on the annual session of

the United Nations Staff Management Coordinating Committee, held in Bangkok, at which she delivered a position paper in her capacity as Chairperson of the GSA.

L. Presentation of the 1998 UNICEF Maurice Pate Award

123. The President and the Executive Director made brief statements as the 1998 UNICEF Maurice Pate Award was presented to the Pacific Regional Human Rights Education Resource Team (RRRT) in recognition for its exceptional work in improving the legal and social status of children and women in the Pacific region. Mr. Kim Stanford-Smith, Director, accepted the Award on behalf of RRRT.

M. Other matters

124. The Chief of the Office of the Executive Director spoke to the Executive Board about his recent participation in the United Nations team that had successfully negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Taliban authorities in Afghanistan. He explained the context of the negotiations, which was the breakdown of conditions of work of United Nations staff working in the country. The Taliban also had a clear policy of discrimination in education and health, and because of this, since 1995 UNICEF had suspended its support to formal education where such discrimination was practised. Finally, there had been a blockade to humanitarian assistance in several areas, resulting in a joint United Nations decision to suspend activities in one area and to close offices there temporarily.

125. Prior to the mission, the Inter-Agency Steering Committee agreed to take a common position and to have a "principled approach". The UNICEF Executive Director had visited Afghanistan in April to underline the common United Nations position and stress the Organization's desire to move forward, through a dialogue, in order to help the people of Afghanistan.

126. He described the composition of the negotiating team, and said that despite the difficult negotiations, progress was made on all points. The Taliban agreed to allow universal access to Central Afghanistan for the delivery of food; there was clear acceptance in writing of the privileges and immunities of United Nations staff; there was agreement in writing on the need and right of women and girls to education and health, specifying the need for equal access and mentioning specific milestones, including the construction of a certain number of schools and improved health facilities, to allow separate but equal access to girls and women; and a process was under way to resolve the issue of the Mahram edict. The next steps of the process would involve a resumption of activities in one area, which was being implemented, and work on specific details for education and health. Once the steps to be taken in education were clear and progress had begun, UNICEF would review its policy regarding support to education.

127. Several important lessons had been learned from the process: having a clear mandate, with defined principles and objectives, and the authority to make decisions, made the negotiations easier; and being able to cooperate and speak with one voice provided a successful example of what the United Nations could accomplish.

128. The President said that presentation had reminded the Executive Board of the importance of the role of UNICEF in the wider United Nations family.

129. Referring to the upcoming Special Session of the General Assembly on drugs, a speaker asked about UNICEF cooperation with the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) in Afghanistan. The Chief of the Office of the Executive Director said that UNDCP was part of the United Nations team in Afghanistan, which was based in Islamabad. UNDCP was working to shift populations from reliance on opium production to other economic activities. This concerned women, especially in rural areas, even if they were not involved in the work force to the same degree as in other regions. UNICEF would work with UNDCP on this issue.

N. Closing of the session

130. The Deputy Executive Director spoke on behalf of the Executive Director. She said that while all Executive Board sessions were important, the annual session had extra significance because of the wide participation of delegations from capitals and National Committees. The Board had achieved much during the session to move the work of UNICEF forward. In particular, the discussions and decision on the follow-up to the World Summit for Children had given the necessary guidance on completing the World Summit's agenda and linking this work to the priorities for the next century. The discussions on the UNICEF health strategy, follow-up to ICPD and the policy on children in need of special protection also provided important guidance. Resource mobilization was perhaps the most important subject discussed during the session, and the Board's comments would be fed into the draft strategy that was under preparation. As for management excellence, after two and one half years, MEP had become an integral part of all UNICEF work and would be discussed as appropriate in various reports to the Board.

131. She announced several changes among UNICEF senior staff: Marta Mauras, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, had been appointed Director of the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General; Shahida Azfar, Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, had been appointed UNICEF Representative in Bangladesh; Urban Jonsson, Regional Director for South Asia, would become the Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa; Cecilio Adorno, Representative in Colombia, had been appointed Deputy Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean; and Richard Morgan, currently Regional Adviser in the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, had been appointed Deputy Director, Programme Division, replacing Joe Judd, who had been named UNICEF Representative in China.

132. The President said that the session had been full and productive, in part because of the conscientious support provided to the Board by the Executive Director and her senior staff. The Board had seen the calibre and commitment of UNICEF professional staff during the session, which was an indication of the depth of UNICEF staff worldwide. The Board's discussions had provided useful guidance to the organization.

133. The Board's dynamic culture was distinctive, he said, because of its tradition of good will and cooperation. No other body in the United Nations system discussed the details of development cooperation in such an atmosphere. This tradition needed to be nurtured, and one way of doing so would be for delegations to be more conscientious about consultations. In closing the session, he thanked the conference officers, interpreters and secretariat staff.

1997 UNICEF Staff Awards for Outstanding Service

134. The Deputy Executive Director announced the winners of the 1997 Staff Awards, which are presented each year in recognition of exemplary accomplishments as members of groups, teams, offices or sections. The winners were: the staff of the UNICEF office in Sierra Leone, in recognition of the exceptional manner in which the evacuation and displacement of staff and the establishment of an office-in-exile were handled; and the staff of the UNICEF office in Rwanda, in recognition of their stamina in carrying out the UNICEF mandate in a country living through the worst chapter in its history.

Annex

DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

1998/8. Resource mobilization strategy for UNICEF

The Executive Board

Takes note of the "Report on the work of the UNICEF Executive Board and secretariat on a resource mobilization strategy for UNICEF" (E/ICEF/1998/11) and of the comments made during the discussion, and requests the secretariat to take the comments into account in preparing the draft resource mobilization strategy for the second regular session in September 1998.

Annual session
2 June 1998

1998/9. UNICEF communication policy

The Executive Board

1. Endorses document E/ICEF/1998/10 on the UNICEF communication strategy as a broad policy framework for UNICEF communication activities, including the continuing efforts of UNICEF to improve research and evaluation capacities and the communication functions for country, regional and headquarters levels;

2. Supports the approach outlined in the policy, which defines UNICEF communication functions as including information, advocacy, behavioural development and change, and social and resource mobilization;

3. Encourages the Executive Director to intensify UNICEF efforts to strengthen collaboration and partnerships with relevant sectors of the communication field.

Annual session
2 June 1998

1998/10. Follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development

The Executive Board

Takes note of the report on "Follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development" (E/ICEF/1998/9) and of the comments made during the discussion of the report.

Annual session
3 June 1998

1998/11. Implementation of management excellence in UNICEF

The Executive Board

1. Notes with appreciation the report on the experience and results of the efforts under the Management Excellence Programme during the last three years (E/ICEF/1998/AB/L.5);

2. Expresses its appreciation for the changes effected in UNICEF's structure, systems, processes and culture, results achieved and tools developed during this period, and encourages the Executive Director to continue strengthening and deepening the implementation of management excellence throughout the organization and at all levels;

3. Endorses the recommendation of the Executive Director that management excellence now be considered 'mainstreamed' and that subsequent reporting on performance be included under the relevant agenda items, with special attention to identifying aspects of accountability, particularly elements of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, in the delivery of agreed programme objectives.

Annual session
5 June 1998

1998/12. Eradication of poliomyelitis

The Executive Board

1. Notes with appreciation the report on UNICEF "1998-2000 Programme Priorities" which gives priority to health issues, including malaria, HIV/AIDS, hygiene and sanitation, salt iodization, vitamin A supplementation, measles, polio and immunization;

2. Expresses its appreciation for the progress which has been made towards the World Summit for Children goal of polio eradication by Governments, UNICEF and their international partners. Polio eradication is clearly an achievable goal, and UNICEF has a comparative advantage. However, polio is still endemic in many parts of the world;

3. Expresses its concern at the gaps in funding and programming which create barriers to polio's successful eradication by the year 2000. Achievement of this goal will make resources, previously devoted to polio, available for present challenges and for those in the twenty-first century, such as malaria;

4. Endorses UNICEF polio eradication efforts working in a coordinated fashion with the World Health Organization, Governments, non-governmental organizations (e.g. Rotary International) and civil society. Polio eradication should be accomplished in such a way as to build capacity in developing health systems. We reaffirm our goal of polio eradication by the year 2000.

Annual session
5 June 1998

1998/13. Follow-up to the World Summit for Children

The Executive Board

1. Notes with satisfaction the overall progress being made in the implementation of the Declaration of the World Summit for Children and its contribution to the realization of children's rights;

2. Recognizes that efficient measures need to be taken to reach the goals for the year 2000 established by the Summit;

3. Supports the priority actions identified by the secretariat to accelerate progress towards achieving the Summit goals by the year 2000 as well as the process developed to measure progress;

4. Requests the Executive Director to support the Secretary-General in the preparation of his report to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly on the preparation of the Assembly's special session in 2001 to review achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children;

5. Further requests the Executive Director to report on the implementation of the present decision to the Executive Board at its annual session in 1999;

6. Recommends that the Economic and Social Council take appropriate actions to highlight the need to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children.

Annual session
5 June 1998